



## TRANSFORMATION TRENDS—18 NOVEMBER ISSUE

*“My biggest concern is that we will attempt to pursue the one best way. This would be a grave error. We don’t want the one best warfighting concept. We want to have alternative, competing warfighting concepts, and we want to have a continuous debate. We don’t want someone to declare the single architecture or the single standard. We have to be tolerant of continuing debate at the operational level, the organizational level and the tactical level.”*

**Art Cebrowski, Director Force Transformation**

### Where—Not When—Preemption Makes Sense

**By Tom Barnett**

Domestic and foreign critics alike have blasted the Bush Administration for a seemingly endless stream of unilateral foreign policy actions over the past year. In the security realm, the most fear-provoking actions involved abrupt reversals of long-established policies regarding weapons of mass destruction (WMD)—for instance, walking away from the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty's restrictions on missile defense and a new preemptive-strike policy regarding states deemed likely to employ WMD.

Digesting these policy shifts, critics naturally assume the Bush White House seeks to employ our military unilaterally around the world, with no regard to its presumed negative impact on global order. In reality, this administration is refining our national security strategy to reflect the bifurcated nature of today's international environment. In short, it is not a matter of *when* preemption makes sense, but *where*.

As globalization deepens and spreads, two groups of states are essentially pitted against one another: countries seeking to align their internal rule sets to the emerging global rule set (e.g., advanced Western democracies, Japan and Asia's emerging economies, Putin's Russia) and countries that either refuse such internal realignment or cannot achieve it due to political/cultural rigidity or continuing abject poverty (much of Central Asia, the



Middle East, Africa, and Central America). I dub the former countries the Functioning Core of globalization, the latter the Non-Integrating Gap.

If we count up U.S. military crisis response activity over the past twenty years, it quickly becomes apparent that the overwhelming majority of our effort was concentrated inside the Gap. In other words, the U.S. "exports" security to precisely those parts of the world that have a hard time coping with globalization or are otherwise not benefiting from it.

The September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks did the U.S. national security establishment a huge favor by pulling us away from the abstract planning of future high-tech wars against make-believe "near peers" into the here-and-now concrete threats to global order. By doing so, the geographic dividing lines between the Core and the Gap were made clear.

The U.S. faces three national security tasks in its role as "system administrator" to globalization: 1) bolster the Core's immune system response to the sort of disruptive perturbations unleashed by 9/11; 2) firewall off the Core from the Gap's worst exports—namely terror, drugs, pandemics; and 3) progressively exporting security to the Gap's worst trouble spots. These are three very different roles, and each will demand very different levels of cooperation with other states.

Bolstering the Core's immune system is overwhelmingly a multilateral affair in which the U.S. builds all sorts of transnational networks of mutual support across both the public and private realms. As a national security issue, it is so much more than just the Department of Defense, fundamentally involving the entire U.S. Government.

Firewalling off the Core from the Gap's worst exports is more bilaterally focused, meaning the U.S. partners intimately with states lying on the bloody seam between Core and Gap. Think of our expanding security relationships with Russia or India, or our growing security assistance to the Philippines or Indonesia.

Finally, exporting security into the Gap's worst trouble spots will be largely unilateral, although we can typically count on the UK for assistance. Here we will play military Leviathan on a regular basis, enforcing the system's rules in a manner no other state can possibly consider.

Understanding our nation's different security roles across these distinct venues goes a long way toward explaining what often seems like the Bush Administration's split personality on national security. For example, when the administration proposes a preemptory strike policy against states possessing dangerous WMD capabilities, does it intend to employ such a policy against fellow members of the Core? Of course not.



While a traditional strategic posture of deterrence still makes sense vis-à-vis a China or the Core as a whole, it simply will not do for several of the real or potential foes we face in the Gap—namely Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. Beyond President Bush's "axis of evil," there are also transnational terrorists to worry about. Simply put, when we cross over into the Gap, we enter a different rule set universe.

When the Bush Administration announces such policy distinctions, it is not striking a unilateralist pose but rather signaling our nation's continued willingness to bear the bulk of the Core's burden in managing and ultimately reducing threats emanating from the Gap. In other words, it is not about seeking a separate rule set for the U.S., but acknowledging the need for one in those parts of the world that do not recognize the emerging global rule set.

Progressively shrinking the Gap will be this country's primary global security task in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Our long-term exporting of security into those Gap areas—namely, Central Asia and the Middle East—that present the greatest potential disruptions to the Core's economic functioning will inevitably rival our Cold War efforts in Europe and Northeast Asia.

To accomplish this task, we must be explicit with both friends and foes alike about how we will necessarily differentiate between our security role within the Core's burgeoning security community and the one we assume whenever we intervene militarily in the Gap. Seeking two sets of rules for these different security roles is not being hypocritical but honest and realistic.

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